



U. S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
George E. B. Holding

Eastern District of North Carolina

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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FORMER BRUNSWICK COUNTY SHERIFF
SENTENCED TO 16 MONTHS IN PRISON

RALEIGH - United States Attorney George E.B. Holding announced that **RONALD E. HEWETT**, 45, was sentenced in federal court today by Senior United States District Judge W. Earl Britt to 16 months imprisonment followed by two years of supervised release. **HEWETT** was also ordered to pay a fine of \$10,000.

On May 8, 2008, **HEWETT** was charged in a one-count Criminal Information charging corruptly endeavoring to obstruct justice, specifically, a federal grand jury investigation into allegations of corruption of his office as Sheriff of Brunswick County, North Carolina. On June 2, 2008, **HEWETT** pled guilty to the charge. **HEWITT** was elected Sheriff of Brunswick County in 1994 and served in that capacity until he was suspended in late March of 2008. **HEWETT** formally resigned from his office as Sheriff on April 15, 2008.

During the last half of **HEWETT'S** tenure, he repeatedly used his office for his personal benefit, rather than for the protection of the citizens of Brunswick County. In addition to obstructing his office's criminal investigation of a relative, **HEWETT** misused

public funds by ordering deputies, while on duty, to perform manual labor at his house and to work on his political campaigns. On June 7, 2007, state and federal agents served 25 federal grand jury subpoenas on **HEWETT** and numerous deputies for the June and July grand juries. Almost immediately after receiving the subpoenas, **HEWETT** began meeting with his deputies and attempting to tamper with their testimony.

HEWETT began instructing his deputies to either assert their Fifth Amendment privilege or to be vague in their answers at grand jury. As **HEWETT** noted to one Captain: "what you don't tell, you don't have to explain." **HEWETT** also arranged for a note to be delivered to a grand jury witness not employed by the Sheriff's Office which contained the words the witness would need to read in grand jury in order to invoke his Fifth Amendment privilege.

As the investigation continued, **HEWETT** resorted to more direct threats of retaliation. For example, **HEWETT** approached a deputy just prior to the federal grand jury meeting dates and inquired as to how the deputy would pay his mortgage without a job and that the deputy had a lot to lose. **HEWETT** also arranged for a Chaplain to attend staff meetings and instruct deputies that they should not cooperate with evil on the witness stand and that while on the witness stand they should not be swayed in their testimony. Finally, **HEWETT** began to retaliate against persons he thought were testifying at grand jury or were cooperating with the federal investigation by taking away their police vehicles and taking away

their authority.

United States Attorney Holding said, ***"Ronald Hewett was not only a law enforcement officer, but he was also entrusted by the people of Brunswick County with leadership of their Sheriff's Office. First, he breached that trust by operating the Sheriff's Office for his personal benefit. Then, when that activity came under investigation, he unlawfully obstructed the investigation. The state of North Carolina is seeking to hold him accountable for the former. Today, the federal court has held him accountable for the latter."***

Special Agent in Charge Nathan Gray, head of the FBI in North Carolina, stated, *"People have faith that as members of law enforcement we will protect them from criminals and violence. When the head of an agency is charged with a crime, it chips away at that trust."* SAC Gray went on to say, *"The US Attorney's Office and the agencies that took part in this investigation have proven through diligence and hard work that anyone committing a crime will be held accountable. This case proves that no one is above the law."*

The investigation has been conducted jointly by the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the United States Postal Inspection Service, in conjunction with the United States Attorney's Office. Assistant U.S. Attorney Dennis M. Duffy and First Assistant U. S. Attorney

John Stuart Bruce are prosecuting the case for the United States.

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